

Secretary's Message

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MESSAGE FROM THE CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REGARDING THE RECENT AUDIT OF THE YOUNTVILLE VETERANS HOME

Yesterday, the California State Auditor released their audit findings regarding the Veterans Home at Yountville. I am disappointed with the Auditor's news release concerning the audit in that it was far more negative in tone than what one would find in reading the audit itself. If I were to write the headlines of their news release it would read like this: "Audit finds no quality of care issues at Home but outlines areas for improvement."

For the most part, the areas noted for improvement in the audit are ones that the Department is already focused on and progress has already occurred. For instance, recruitment of staff is a challenge for all health care organizations in California. Yet, the Department has been a leader in the state in promoting changes in salary structures and new recruiting incentives to attract more professional staff. Further, even though there is still extensive use of overtime, the Home has reduced the vacancy rates in the majority of professional staff over the past 4 years.

Similarly, the Home has many residents or patients with limited mobility. Consequently, improvement of the physical plant, including sidewalks and parking lots, and remodeling of living or care units, to better serve those with limited mobility, is constantly on our front burner. In non-health care facilities the ADA requirements discussed in the audit become more of a problem and require special attention. In Veterans Homes, we live ADA every day because of our resident/patient population and every project we do includes an upgrade to ADA standards. We have just completed an infrastructure study for Yountville which will address some of the long-range planning issues but many more issues will remain and will be addressed by a long-range strategic plan for the campus.

The one area of the audit that I find to be the most helpful is the focus on bio-medical equipment and the need for a more robust oversight program for the preventive maintenance of our medical equipment. This is an area we will immediately address by adjusting our resources and procedures. The other issue of complaint follow-up that was discussed in the audit is one that we will address through improving documentation. The Department has a policy of responding to all complaints and addressing issues as quickly and forthrightly as possible. Therefore, we will make sure that the documentation supporting this policy is clear and comprehensive for all to see.

This is the 3rd audit done on the Home since 1997, and each audit has provided suggestions and recommendations on areas of improvement. If the Fact Sheet released by the State Auditor had the headline that I proposed earlier I think it would more accurately reflect the findings of this audit. I know that our staff at the Veterans Home in Yountville is doing a terrific job in giving the best possible care and service to our Veterans; that is their collective mission and their commitment. This audit essentially validates that statement, and for that, we can be appropriately pleased with the result.

Tom Johnson
Secretary

The audit can be viewed at: <http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2007-121.pdf>.

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Note to editors: This Advisory and previous CDVA news releases, advisories, and newsletters are available on our website at www.cdva.ca.gov and via email from Jaime.Arteaga@cdva.ca.gov.